

Revelation's New Jerusalem in Late Antiquity

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Revelation 20 and 21 and the New Jerusalem According to Ambrosiaster and Jerome*

Alessandro Capone

*Debitum ergo reddis,
non largiris indebitum*
(Ambrose, *De Nabuthae historia* 12.53)

Introduction

As is well known, Jerome very likely oversaw the revision of Victorinus of Petovium's *Commentary on the Apocalypse* in the spring of 398.¹ As he himself declares, he made corrections to Victorinus's text with respect to the millennialist interpretation, literal explanations, and the various errors that were brought into it due to the inexperience of text copyists. Indeed, in the prologue Jerome declares that he immediately reread the books of the ancient authors and from them obtained information about the millennial reign that he incorporated into his recension of Victorinus's *Commentary*.²

In the present contribution, I will focus on the ending that Jerome added to Victorinus's text in order to explain Rev 20 and 21. It is in this passage that Jerome provides an allegorical interpretation that replaces the millenarian one proposed by Victorinus.³ Instead of seeking to treat Jerome's interpretation of

* I would like to thank Rita Bennett for helping to improve my English and Andrew Cain and Nathan Betz for some helpful tips.

¹ See Martine Dulaey, "Jérôme 'éditeur' du *Commentaire sur l'Apocalypse* de Victorin de Poetovio," *Revue des études augustinienes* 37, no. 2 (1991): 203–7. See also Carmelo Curti, "Girolamo e il millenarismo di Vittorino di Petovio," *Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi* 15, no. 1 (1998): 195, who considers the dating, based on the reference to Jerome's disease, not unlikely. As will be seen below, however, this dating of Jerome's revision may now be made with much greater certainty.

² Cf. Jerome, *Expl. Apoc.* Prol. (Roger Gryson, ed., *Victorini Poetovionensis Explanatio in Apocalypsin una cum recensione Hieronymi*, CCSL 5 [Turnhout: Brepols, 2017], 109): *Et quia me litteris obtestatus es, nolui differre, sed ne spernerem precantem, maiorum statim libros reuolui et quod in eorum commentariis de mille annorum regno repperi Victorini opusculis sociaui, ablatis inde quae ipse secundum litteram senserit.*

³ On Victorinus's millennialism, which appears moderate and open to the influences of Alexandrian thought, see Carmelo Curti, "Il regno millenario in Vittorino di Petovio,"

Rev 20–21 exhaustively, I will highlight three points that will shed particular light on Jerome’s approach. Specifically, I will focus on (1) the sources that might have informed Jerome’s interpretation, (2) an identical interpretation of the New Jerusalem that Jerome offers elsewhere in his *corpus*, and (3) polemical references that Jerome makes with reference to the exegesis of Revelation that was proposed by Ambrosiaster.

1 The Number One Thousand

In introducing his interpretation of chapters 20 and 21 of Revelation, Jerome immediately clarifies that the millennial kingdom described in the text is not an earthly kingdom or, if it is, that it has an end. Jerome thereby makes clear that his interpretation of these chapters stands in stark contrast both to that of Victorinus, whose commentary he was correcting, and to that of Ambrosiaster, whose views on the New Jerusalem were well known to Jerome.⁴ The thousand-year kingdom of Rev 20:6–7, Jerome writes, reflects the number of Christian perfection. The number one thousand, he reasons, is the product of ten – which indicates the Decalogue⁵ – and one hundred – which represents the crown of virginity.⁶ This interpretation of the number one hundred, so necessary to his

Augustinianum 18 (1978): 419–33. See also Konrad Huber’s contribution to the present volume. On the history of the patristic exegesis of Revelation, see Clementina Mazzucco, “La Gerusalemme celeste dell’‘Apocalisse’ nei Padri,” in *‘La dimora di Dio con gli uomini’ (Ap 21,3): immagini della Gerusalemme celeste dal III al XIV secolo*, ed. Maria Louisa Gatti Perer (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1983), 49–75; Roger Gryson, “Les commentaires patristiques latins de l’Apocalypse (à suivre),” *Revue théologique de Louvain* 28, no. 3 (1997): 305–37; and Roger Gryson, “Les commentaires patristiques latins de l’Apocalypse (suite et fin),” *Revue théologique de Louvain* 28, no. 4 (1997): 484–502.

⁴ Cf. Jerome, *Expl. Apoc.* 5 (Gryson, *Explanatio* [cf. note 2], 253): *Nam mille annorum regnum non arbitror esse terrenum, aut si ita sentiendum est, completis annis mille regnare desinunt.* Cf. in parallel Victorinus’s text and Jerome’s revision: Victorinus, *Expl. Apoc.* 5 (252): *Coccineum autem diabolum includi et omnes angelos eius refugas in tartarum gehennae in aduentum domini nemo ignoret <et> post mille annos dimitti propter gentes quae seruiuerint Antichristo, ut ipsae solae pereant, quia sic meruerunt, dein fieri catholice iudicium;* Jerome, *Expl. Apoc.* 5 (253): *“Mille anni” in quibus alligatus est Satanas isti sunt ab aduentu primo Christi usque ad terminum saeculi, mille autem dicti eo loquendi modo quo pars significatur a toto, sicut est illud uerbi quod mandauit in mille generationes, dum non sunt mille.* Even for Ambrosiaster the millennial reign is earthly, as evidenced by the insistence on the adverb *hic*: Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Matt. frag.* 2.9, 10, 12 (Alessandra Pollastri, ed., *Ambrosiaster. Frammenti esegetici su Matteo*, Biblioteca patristica 50 [Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 2014] 224, 226, 234, 236 and notes).

⁵ See Alessandro Capone, “Numeri e simboli nell’esegesi geronimiana dei Salmi,” *Rivista di Cultura Classica e Medioevale* 59, no. 1 (2017): 164–72.

⁶ Cf. Jerome, *Expl. Apoc.* 5 (*Explanatio* [cf. note 2], 253–255): *Denarius numerus decalogum significat, centenarius uirginitatis coronam ostendit.* On the symbolism of the number one hundred see Heinz Meyer, Rudolf Suntrup, *Lexikon der mittelalterlichen Zahlenbedeutungen*, Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1987), coll. 792–793.

view of the millennium, finds a significant parallel in his *Aduersus Iovinianum* 1.3 (AD 393) with reference to the parable of the sower (Matt 13:8).⁷

This passage from *Aduersus Iovinianum* is significant for our inquiry for at least two reasons. First, it allows us to place Jerome's interpretation of the three numbers mentioned in the parable of the sower – one hundred, sixty, and thirty – within contemporary Latin culture. This is clearly demonstrated by the finger-based computing system in use in imperial Rome to which Jerome refers.⁸ His understanding of the millennium, therefore, does not seem influenced, even in its symbolic value, by the Greek tradition. Second, it suggests linking not only the texts but also the contexts of Bethlehem, where Jerome was writing in 398, and Rome, where *Aduersus Iovinianum* was addressed a few years earlier in 393. Consequently, it is possible to discern a connection between the direct or indirect recipients of Jerome's controversy in both 393 and 398. In other words, the elements of affinity between the two Hieronymian texts in question – *De explanatione Apocalypsis prologus* and *Aduersus Iovinianum* 1.3 – suggest that Jerome is arguing, albeit a few years later, with a certain literalist exegetical tendency surrounding the interpretation of the number one thousand that was still active in Rome at the time that he revised Victorinus's *Commentary* on Revelation.

⁷ Jerome, *Jov.* 1.3 (PL 23:223B–224A): *Centesimus et sexagesimus et tricesimus fructus quanquam de una terra, et de una semente nascatur, tamen multum differt in numero. Triginta referuntur ad nuptias. Nam et ipsa digitorum coniunctio, quasi molli se complexans osculo, et foederans, maritum pingit et coniugem. Sexaginta uero ad uiduas, eo quod in angustia et tribulatione sunt positae. Unde et superiori digito deprimuntur; quantoque maior est difficultas expertae quondam uoluptatis illecebris abstinere, tanto maius est praemium. Porro centesimus numerus (diligenter, quaeso, lector, attende) de sinistra transfertur ad dexteram, et iisdem quidem digitis, sed non eum manu, quibus in laeua nuptae significatur et uiduae, circulum faciens, exprimit uirginitatis coronam. Cf. Jerome, *Epist.* 49.2 (Isidorus Hilberg, ed., *Sancti Hieronymi Eusebii epistulae* [Vindobonae, Lipsiae: F. Tempisky, G. Freytag, 1910], 353–54): note that this letter addressed to Pammachius in 393 quotes the long passage from the *Aduersus Iovinianum* in response to accusations of the excessive, almost Manichean, praise of virginity by Jerome over marriage: see Andrew Cain, *The Letters of Jerome: Asceticism, Biblical Exegesis, and the Construction of Christian Authority in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 137. Cf. also *Epist.* 107.13 (Hilberg, *Epistulae*, 304): *Sit in gremio auiae, quae repetat in nepte, quidquid praemisit in filia, quae longo usu didicit nutrire, docere, seruare uirgines, in cuius corona centenarii cotidie numeri castitas textitur; Epist.* 123.8 (p. 82): *Nam cum in semente terrae bonae centesimum et sexagesimum et tricesimum fructum euangelia doceant et centenarius pro uirginitatis corona primum gradum teneat, sexagenarius pro labore uiduarum in secundo sit numero, tricenarius foedera nuptiarum ipsa digitorum coniunctione testetur, digamia in quo erit numero?* On this type of interpretation and on other Hieronymian passages see Antonio Quacquarelli, *Il triplice frutto della vita cristiana: 100, 60 e 30 (Matteo XIII – 8, nelle diverse interpretazioni)* (Roma: Edipuglia, 1953), 43–47.*

⁸ See Quacquarelli, *Il triplice frutto* (cf. note 7), 37–42; Henri-Irénée Marrou, “L'évangile de vérité et la diffusion du comput digital dans l'antiquité,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 12, no. 2 (1958): 98–103 (= Henri-Irénée Marrou, *Christiana tempora: Mélanges d'histoire, d'archéologie, d'épigraphie et de patristique*, Collection de l'École Française de Rome 35 [Rome: École française de Rome, 1978], 331–36).

Writing just two weeks before Easter 398 (April 18) – and thus around the same time as he was writing his *Commentary on the Apocalypse* – Jerome in *Commentary on Matthew* 2.13.23 refers back explicitly to *Aduersus Iovinianum* and proposes the same numerological interpretation, albeit in a more succinct way.⁹ In fact, Jerome wrote his *Commentary on Matthew* at the request of Eusebius of Cremona, who would have left the monastery of Bethlehem, accompanied by Jerome's brother Paulinus, and who wanted to bring the commissioned writing to Rome. On two occasions in this work, Jerome alludes to the poor health he had experienced in the three months leading up to his writing the Matthew commentary: he hopes to be able to complete his work *si autem mihi uita longior fuerit*¹⁰ and hints at the possibility of commenting more extensively on the book of *Exodus si uita comes fuerit*.¹¹ Tellingly, Jerome makes a similar comment at the end of the prologue to the *Commentary on the Apocalypse*: *Si uita nobis comes fuerit et dominus sanitatem dederit, tibi nostrum in hoc uolumine potissimum sudabit ingenium, Anatoli carissime*.¹² These data, combined with the common numerological interpretation adduced above and presented for the first time in *Aduersus Iovinianum*, lead us to realize two things. On the one hand, they indicate that the *Commentary on the Apocalypse* and the *Commentary on Matthew* were composed at roughly the same time and could therefore share similar content; on the other hand, they reasonably suggest once again that Jerome

⁹ Jerome, *Comm. Matt.* 2.13.23 (David Hurst and Marcus Adriaen, ed., *Sancti Hieronymi Presbyteri. Commentariorum in Mathaeum libri iv*, CCSL 77 [Turnhout: Brepols, 1969], 106): *Primum ergo debemus audire, deinde intellegere, et post intellegentiam fructus reddere doctrinarum et facere uel centesimum fructum uel sexagesimum atque tricesimum; de quibus plenus in libro contra Iouinianum diximus et nunc breuiter perstringimus, centesimum fructum uirginibus, sexagesimum uiduis et continentibus, tricesimum sancto matrimonio deputantes*. See the notes *ad locum* in Daniela Scardia, ed., *Girolamo. Commento a Matteo* (Roma: Città Nuova, 2022), 290–291. Note that there was a millennial interpretation of the numbers one hundred, sixty, and thirty in the parable of the sower: cf. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.36.1–2 (Adelin Rousseau, Louis Doutreleau, and Charles Mercier, ed., *Contre les hérésies. Livre 5: édition critique d'après les versions arménienne et latine*, SC 153 [Paris: Cerf, 1969], 456–58): Καθώς οἱ πρεσβύτεροι λέγουσι, τότε οἱ μὲν καταξωθέντες τῆς ἐν οὐρανῷ διατριβῆς ἐκέισε χωρήσουσιν, οἱ δὲ τῆς τοῦ παραδείσου τρυφῆς ἀπολαύσουσιν, οἱ δὲ τὴν καλλονὴν καὶ τὴν λαμπρότητα τῆς πόλεως καθέξουσιν, σὺν πᾶσι τοῖς περὶ αὐτὴν ἀγαθοῖς ἐπιχορηγουμένοις ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ, πανταχοῦ δὲ ὁ Σωτὴρ ὁραθήσεται, καθὼς ἄξιοι ἔσονται οἱ ὀρώντες αὐτόν. Εἶναι δὲ τὴν διαστολὴν ταύτην τῆς οἰκίσεως τῶν τὰ ἑκατὸν καρποφορούντων καὶ τῶν τὰ ἐξήκοντα καὶ τῶν τὰ τριάκοντα, ὧν οἱ μὲν εἰς τοὺς οὐρανούς ἀναληφθήσονται, οἱ δὲ ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ διατρίψουσιν, οἱ δὲ τὴν πόλιν κατοικήσουσιν.

¹⁰ Jerome, *Comm. Matt.* praef. (Hurst and Adriaen, *Commentariorum* [cf. note 9], 5); see the notes *ad locum* in Scardia, *Commento* (cf. note 9), 74.

¹¹ Jerome, *Comm. Matt.* 4.26.1–2 (Hurst and Adriaen, *Commentariorum* [cf. note 9], 245); see the notes *ad locum* in Scardia, *Commento* (cf. note 9), 567.

¹² Jerome, *Expl. Apoc.* Prol. (Gryson, *Explanatio* [cf. note 2], 109). On Anatolius, of whom almost nothing is known, see Dulaey, “Jérôme ‘éditeur’” (cf. note 1), 201. Alfons Fürst, *Hieronymus: Askese und Wissenschaft in der Spätantike* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2003), 155.

intends to specifically address Rome, which, as indicated above, was the intended destination of his *Commentary on Matthew*.

Jerome seems to be aware of the interpretation attested in the work of the anonymous author known as “Ambrosiaster.” Indeed, we observe Ambrosiaster using Matt 13:8 and 23 together with other scriptural passages (e.g. Ps 1 and 1 Cor 15:52–53) according to a millennialist perspective, this in order to distinguish three categories of men in relation to their eschatological fate. These three categories are the righteous, the wicked, and the sinners.¹³ We find this interpretation explicitly in his explanation of 1 Cor 15:41 and implied in the fragment *De tribus mensuris* of Ambrosiaster’s *Commentary on Matthew*.¹⁴ Ambrosiaster presents the anthropological and eschatological tripartition in *Quaestio* 110 as well, when he comments on Ps 1:5.¹⁵

By providing in his recension of Victorinus’s *Commentary* a symbolic interpretation of the number one thousand – one based, as we have seen, on a unique aspect of Latin counting culture – in opposition to a literal interpretation of the number, Jerome is able to distance himself from Victorinus’s eschatological reading of Revelation and to introduce a spiritual reading of Alexandrian origin.¹⁶ According to this allegorical reading, the thousand years of the devil’s captivity, represents how Christ’s priests have killed impure actions and thoughts in

¹³ See Emanuele Di Santo, *L'apologetica dell'Ambrosiaster. Cristiani, pagani e giudei nella Roma tardoantica*, *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 112 (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2008), 396–99. On the eschatological vision of Ambrosiaster with particular reference to his *Commentary on Matthew*, see Pollastri, *Frammenti* (cf. note 4), 102–35.

¹⁴ Cf. Ambrosiaster, *Comm. 1 Cor. 15.41* (Heinrich J. Vogels, ed., *Ambrosiastri qui dicitur Commentarius in Epistulas Paulinas pars secunda, in epistulas ad Corinthios* [Vienna: Hoelder, Pichler, Tempisky, 1968], 179–80): *Unius naturae comparatione utitur ad indiscretas substantiae reddendam rationem, quia sicut sol et luna et stellae, cum sint unius quidem naturae, diversae tamen claritatis sunt, ita et homines, cum sint unius generis, merito tamen dissimiles erunt in gloria, ut claritati solis illorum dignitas exaequetur, qui centesimum numerum habent, qui ut perfecti essent primi gradus aemuli fuerunt, de quibus dictum est: tunc iusti fulgebunt sicut sol in regno patris sui. Lunari autem claritati hi comparandi sunt, qui sexagesimum numerum bonis operibus mercati sunt, ut secundi gradus meritum haberent. Stellis autem clarioribus eorum merita comparanda sunt, qui tricesimum numerum, tertii gradus dignitatem iustis laboribus quaesiverunt.* Cf. also Ambrosiaster *Comm. Matt. frag. 4* (Pollastri, *Frammenti* [cf. note 4], 254) and the notes ad locum.

¹⁵ Cf. Ambrosiast. *Quaest.* 110.17 (Alexander Souter, ed., *Pseudo-Augustini quaestiones veteris et novi testamenti CXXVII*, [Vienna: F. Tempisky, 1908], 276–77): *In hoc psalmo tria genera hominum significat: impiorum et peccatorum et iustorum, quo ordine coeptus est error. sed impii ab his alieni sunt, quia sub dei decreto, sicut dixi, uiuere noluerunt; peccatores autem sub dei lege agentes ante tribunal Christi sistendi sunt segregati a iustis, ut acceptae legis praestent rationem, emendandi in quibus operam non dederunt, ut plus haberent laudis quam uituperationis; iusti uero ualde propensiores in exercitio implendae legis inuenti remunerandi sunt.* See Alessandra Pollastri, “Escatologia e Scrittura nell’Ambrosiaster,” *Annali di Storia dell’Esegesi* 17, no. 1 (2000): 117.

¹⁶ See Dulaey, “Jérôme ‘éditeur’” (cf. note 1). For Victorinus’s interpretation of the New Jerusalem, see the contribution of Konrad Huber to the present volume.

their hearts, thereby chaining up the devil. Those who are prey to the heretics, however, have abandoned the virginity of both heart and body and allow the devil free rein. For Jerome, the period of a thousand years is not a chronological indication; rather, it is a number that indicates that the number of saints is complete.¹⁷

2 The Description of the Holy City

Having dispensed with the literal interpretation of the millennium, Jerome can dwell on the description of the city that is presented in Rev 21:16–21 and explain the symbolic value of some of its details.

One among these details is the city's square shape.¹⁸ Traditionally, the square is a symbol of stability. Philo, for instance, understands the square with reference to fair argumentation, equality, justice, and perfection.¹⁹ Origen, too, considers it

¹⁷ Cf. Jerome, *Expl. Apoc.* 5 (Gryson, *Explanatio* [cf. note 2], 255–57): *Qui enim uirginitatis integrum seruauerit qui enim uirginitatis integrum seruauerit propositum et decalogi fideliter praecepta impleuerit et impuros mores uel impuras cogitationes intra cordis cubiculum iugulauerit, ne ne dominantur ei, iste uere sacerdos est Christi et millenarium numerum perficiens integre creditur regnare cum Christo et recte apud eum ligatus est diabolus. Qui uero uitis et dogmatibus hereticorum irretitus est, in eo solutus est diabolus. Sed quia completis mille annis dicit eum solui, completo perfectorum sanctorum numero, in quibus corpore et corde uirginitas regnat....*

¹⁸ Jerome, *Expl. Apoc.* 5 (Gryson, *Explanatio* [cf. note 2], 259): *“Ciuitatem quadratam” sanctorum adunatam turbam ostendit, in quibus nullo modo fides fluctuare potuit, sicut ad Noe praecipitur ut ex quadratis lignis faceret arcam, quae diluuii posset impetus ferre.*

¹⁹ Cf. Philo, *Plant.* 121–122 (Leopold Cohn and Paul Wendland, ed., *Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt*, vol. 2 [Berlin: Reimer, 1897], 157): Πρεσβυτάτος τε αὐτῶν τετραγώνων ὁ ἀριθμὸς ὧν ἐν ὀρθαῖς γωνίαις, ὡς τὸ κατὰ γεωμετρίαν δηλοῖσχήμα, ἐξετάζεται· αἱ δ' εἰσὶν ὀρθότητος λόγου σαφῆ δείγματα, πηγὴ δὲ ἀέναος ἀρετῶν ὁ ὀρθὸς λόγος. ἀνάγκη μέντοι τὰς τοῦ τετραγώνου πλευρὰς ἴσας εἶναι· δικαιοσύνην δὲ ἰσότης τὴν ἔξαρχον καὶ ἡγεμονίδα τῶν ἀρετῶν ἔτεκεν· ὥστε ἰσότητος καὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ πάσης ἀρετῆς χωρὶς τῶν ἄλλων ἐπιδεικνύται τὸν ἀριθμὸν εἶναι σύμβολον; Philo, *Opif.* 49–50 (Leopold Cohn, ed., *Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt*, vol. 1, [Berlin: Reimer, 1896], 16): “Ἔστι δὲ καὶ δύναμις ἄλλη τετράδος λεχθῆναι τε καὶ νοηθῆναι θαυμασιωτάτη, πρώτη γὰρ αὕτη τὴν τοῦ στερεοῦ φύσιν ἔδειξε, τῶν πρὸ αὐτῆς ἀριθμῶν τοῖς ἀσωμάτοις ἀνακειμένων· κατὰ μὲν γὰρ τὸ ἐν τέταρται τὸ λεγόμενον ἐν γεωμετρία σημείον, κατὰ δὲ τὰ δύο γραμμῆ, διότι ῥύσει μὲν ἐνὸς δυάς, ῥύσει δὲ σημείου συνίσταται γραμμῆ· γραμμῆ δ' ἐστὶ μήκος ἀπλάτης· πλάτους δὲ προσγενομένου γίνεται ἐπιφάνεια, ἣ τέτακται κατὰ τριάδα· ἐπιφανεία δὲ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ στερεοῦ φύσιν ἐνὸς δεῖ τοῦ βάθους, ὃ προστεθὲν τριάδι γίνεται τετράς· ὅθεν καὶ μέγα χρῆμα συμβέβηκεν εἶναι τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦτον, ὃς ἐκ τῆς ἀσωμάτου καὶ νοητῆς οὐσίας ἠγαγεν εἰς ἐννοίαν ἡμᾶς τριχῆ διαστατοῦ σώματος τοῦ φύσει πρῶτον αἰσθητοῦ. ὃ δὲ μὴ συνείς τὸ λεγόμενον ἕκ τινος παιδιᾶς εἴσεται πάνυ συνήθους. οἱ καρνατιζόντες εἰώθασιν τρία ἐν ἐπιπέδῳ κάρνα προτιθέντες ἐπιφέρειν ἐν σχῆμα πυραμοειδὲς ἀπογεννῶντες· τὸ μὲν οὖν ἐν ἐπιπέδῳ τρίγωνον ἴσταται μέχρι τριάδος, τὸ δ' ἐπιτεθὲν τετράδα μὲν ἐν ἀριθμοῖς, ἐν δὲ σχήμασι πυραμίδα γεννάει, στερεὸν ἤδη σῶμα; Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 128 (Leopold Cohn and Paul Wendland, ed., *Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt*, vol. 4 [Berlin: Reimer, 1902], 230): Σχήμα δ' ἀπένευμεν ὁ τεχνίτης τετράγωνον τῷ λογιῶ πάνυ καλῶς αἰνιττόμενος, ὡς χρῆ καὶ τὸν τῆς φύσεως λόγον καὶ τὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου βεβηκέναι πάντη καὶ κατὰ μηδ' ὅτι οὖν κραδαίνεσθαι. παρὸ καὶ τὰς εἰρημένας δύο ἀρετὰς προσεκλήρωσεν

a symbol of security and strength and in that sense interprets the square beams of Noah's ark.²⁰ Jerome's own interpretation appears to be indebted directly to an Origenian explanation, which is in turn inserted into a previous tradition. Importantly, Jerome mentions a similar type of explanation in *Epistle 46*, written in the spring of 386.²¹ There, the interpretation of the square city as the assembled multitude of saints – here Jerome refers to Heb 12:22–23 – may therefore be identified as a premise of Jerome's exegesis.

Jerome then goes on to comment on Rev 21:19–20, where it is said that the city is adorned with all kinds of precious stones. These stones Jerome interprets according to a spiritual interpretation.²² The possible Origenian roots of this

αὐτῶ, δὴ λῶσίν τε καὶ ἀλήθειαν· ὁ τε γὰρ τῆς φύσεως λόγος ἀληθῆς καὶ δηλωτικὸς πάντων ὁ τε τοῦ σοφοῦ μμούμενος ἐκεῖνον ὀφείλει προσηκόντως ἀψευδέστατος τε εἶναι τιμῶν ἀλήθειαν καὶ μηδὲν φθόνῳ συσκιάζειν, ὧν ἡ μῆνυσις ὠφελήσει τοὺς ἀναδιδαχθέντας.

²⁰ Cf. Origen, *Hom. Gen. 2.4* (Willem A. Baerhens, ed., *Origenes. Homilien zum Hexateuch in Rufins Übersetzung. Erster Teil, Die Homilien zu Genesis, Exodus und Leviticus* (Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1920), 32): *Quadratum est quod nulla vacillat ex parte, sed quocumque verteris, fida et solida stabilitate consistit*; Origen, *Frag. Cor.* 16.1.3.16–20 (Francesco Pieri, ed., *Origenes. Esegisi paolina. i testi frammentari*, vol 14/4 [Roma: Città nuova, 2009], 84–86): *Εἰ θέλεις ἀληθινὸν ναὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ μαθεῖν, ζῆτει λίθους ζῶντας καὶ καθαρὸς λελατομημένους, ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου βεβληκῶτας, καὶ ἐστῶτας τετραγώνους, μηδὲν ἔχοντας ἄστατον μηδὲ κυλιόμενον· εἰ γὰρ καὶ λίθοι ἅγιοι κυλιόνται ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ἀλλ' οἱ λατομοὶ οὐκ ἔωσιν αὐτοὺς μέχρι τέλους κυλιέσθαι.*

²¹ Cf. Jerome, *Epist. 46.6* (Hilberg, *Epistulae* [cf. note 7], 335–36): *Nec statim potes dicere sanctam dici Hierusalem caelestem, quae futura est, et Aegyptum et Sodomam eam, quae conruit, appellari, quia de futura dicitur, quod bestia, quae ascensura est de abyssu, faciat aduersus duos prophetas bellum et uincat illos et occidat et corpora eorum iaceant in plateis ciuitatis magnae. de qua ciuitate et in fine eiusdem libri scribitur: et ciuitas in quadrato posita est et longitudo eius et latitudo tanta est, quanta et altitudo. et mensus est ciuitatem de harundine per stadia duodecim milia. longitudo et latitudo et altitudo eius aequalia sunt. et mensus est muros eius centum quadraginta quattuor cubitorum mensura hominis, quae est angeli. et erat structura muri eius ex lapide iaspide, ipsa uero ciuitas auro mundo et cetera. ubi quadrum est, nec longitudo nec latitudo appellari potest. et quae est ista mensura, ut tanta sit longitudo et latitudo, quanta et altitudo eius, et muri de lapide iaspide et tota ciuitas de auro mundo et fundamenta et plateae eius de lapidibus pretiosis et duodecim portae fulgentes margaritis?* It is now common opinion that the letter was written by Jerome and not by Paula and Eustochium. On the dating of this letter see Pierre Nautin, “La Lettre de Paule et Eustochium à Marcelle (Jérôme, *Ep.* 46),” *Augustinianum* 24 (1984): 441–48. See also Neil Adkin, “The Letter of Paula and Eustochium to Marcella: Some Notes,” *Maia* 51 (1999): 97–110.

²² Jerome, *Expl. Apoc. 5* (Gryson, *Explanatio* [cf. note 2], 259–61): “*Pretiosos lapides*” fortes in persecutione uiros ostendit, qui nec tempestate persecutorum moueri nec impetu pluuiarum a uera fide dissolui poterunt; propterea “auro mundo” sociantur, eius quibus regis magni ciuitas decoratur. “Platea” uero eorum ostenditur corda ab omnibus mundata sordibus, ubi deambulet dominus. “Flumen” uero “uitae” spiritalis natiuitatis currere gratiam ostendit. “Lignum uitae ex utraque ripa” Christi secundum carnem ostendit aduentum, quem uenturum et passurum uetus lex praedixit et euangelio manifestatur. “Fructus” uero “duodecim per singulos menses” duodecim apostolorum diuersae gratiae ostenduntur, quas ab uno ligno crucis suscipientes populos fame consumptos uerbi dei praedicatione satiarent. Et quia dicit “in ciuitate solem non esse necessarium,” euidenter ostendit creatorem luminum immaculatum fulgere in medio eius, cuius splendorem nullus poterit sensus cogitare nec lingua proloqui.

spiritual interpretation have already been highlighted by Martine Dulaey, who notes that it focuses, as is typical of allegorical exegesis, on the details of the biblical text. Even so, it is useful to recall Victorinus's text, which is limited, at least in the first instance, to summarizing the characteristics of the city described in Revelation.²³

A comparison of these two passages – Jerome's *Expl. Apoc.* 5 and Victorinus's *Expl. Apoc.* 5 – reveals two significant divergences between their respective explanations. The first concerns the concept of "kingdom," which Victorinus, in line with the millennialist tradition, considers on the basis of various scriptural passages to be a real and definite period of chronological time – a concept, as we have seen, that was rejected by Jerome. The second difference concerns the notion of "first resurrection" that Victorinus defines on the basis of two Pauline parallels (1 Thess 4:15–17 and 1 Cor 15:52). This notion and these passages will return in Ambrosiaster's exegesis. In this first resurrection, the manifestation of the holy city takes place as is described in Revelation: namely, that all who have reigned with Christ – whether they are those Jews who at the end of time have believed in the gospel due to the preaching of Elijah or those whom the Spirit proved to be virgins in body and tongue – will rise again.²⁴

According to Rev 21:21–25 the holy city has twelve gates, three on each side, each of which is made of a single pearl and will never be closed. For these verses, too, Jerome again in contrast with Victorinus offers a spiritual interpretation. For Jerome, the four sides represent four virtues in relation to one another, namely prudence, fortitude, justice, and temperance.²⁵ In addition to the parallels to

²³ Victorinus, *Expl. Apoc.* 5 (Gryson, *Explanatio* [cf. note 2], 258): *In regno ergo et in prima resurrectione exhibetur "ciuitas sancta," quam dicit "descensuram de caelo" quadratam, differentium et preciositatis et coloris et generis lapidum circumdatam, "auro mundo," id est dilucido, "similem."* "Cristallo" inquit "plateam" eius stratam; flumen uitae per medium effluens et uitae fontes aquarum; lignum uitae in circuitu per singulos menses faciens fructus differentes. Lumen ibi solis non esse propter eminentiorem gloriam; "agnus" enim, inquit, id est deus, "lux ei <u> est."

²⁴ Cf. Victorinus, *Expl. Apoc.* 5 (Gryson, *Explanatio* [cf. note 2], 254): *De hac resurrectione ait: Et uidi agnum stantem et cum eo centum quadraginta quatuor milia, id est cum Christo stantes, eos scilicet qui ex Iudeis in nouissimo tempore sunt credituri per praedicationem Heliae, quos non solum testatur spiritu corpore uirgineo, sed et lingua.*

²⁵ Jerome, *Expl. Apoc.* 5 (Gryson, *Explanatio* [cf. note 2], 263–65): *Quattuor arbitror esse uirtutes, prudentiam fortitudinem iustitiam temperantiam, quae inuicem sibi haerent et, dum mutuo miscentur, duodenarium efficiunt numerum. "Portae" uero "duodecim" apostolorum esse credimus numerum, qui in quattuor uirtutibus ut pretiosae margaritae fulgentes iter sanctis – lumen doctrinae suae – manifestantes ad ciuitatem sanctorum ingredi faciunt, ut de conuersatione eorum angelorum laetetur chorus. "Non posse claudi portas": euidenter ostenditur nulla contradicentium tempestate apostolorum doctrinam superari. Etiam fluctus gentium et hereticorum insana superstitione dum ad fidem ueram furiunt, superatae eorum spumae dissoluuntur, quia petra Christus est, a quo et per quem ecclesia fundata nullis fluctibus insanientium hominum superatur. Ergo audiendi non sunt qui mille annorum regnum terrenum esse confirmant, qui cum Cerintho heretico sentiunt. Cf. Victorinus, *Expl. Apoc.* 5 (Gryson, *Explanatio* [cf. note 2], 258–60).*

these passages that Dulaey finds in Jerome's pre-398 *corpus*, one must note a passage from a letter addressed to Pammachius that dates from the beginning of 398 (*Epist.* 66) and also incorporates the concept of the connection of the four virtues.²⁶ This, incidentally, might further confirm 398 as the year in which Jerome revised Victorinus's commentary. We may also note that *Epist.* 66 proposes relations with Rome, much like his *Commentary on the Apocalypse* seems to.

Building on this interpretation, Jerome goes on to explain that the twelve gates are like the apostles who, making the light of their doctrine shine like precious stones in the four virtues, show the saints the way to enter the holy city.²⁷ Furthermore, he interprets the fact that the city gates cannot be closed as a demonstration that the doctrine of the apostles will not be overturned by a storm of opponents, even if the waves of pagans and heretics rage against the true faith. In this final passage, it is also interesting to note an affinity with the conclusion of the contemporary *Commentary on Matthew: Usque ad consummationem saeculi cum discipulis se futurum esse promittit et illos ostendit semper esse uicturos et se numquam a credentibus recessurum*.²⁸ This passage, although not entirely perspicuous, seems clearer in the light of what Jerome affirms in his commentary on the final chapters of Revelation, since the victory over heretics and pagans is assured by the presence of Christ, on whose rock the church is founded.

3 Ambrosiaster and the Holy City

Ambrosiaster's adherence to millennialism is known, according to a tradition that runs through part of patristic production, to be especially Western.²⁹ At the same time, however, Ambrosiaster demonstrates a predilection for chronological

²⁶ Cf. Jerome, *Epist.* 66.3 (Hilberg, *Epistulae* [cf. note 7], 649): *Quattuor uirtutes describunt stoici ita sibi inuicem nexas et mutuo cohaerentes, ut, qui unam non habuerit, omnibus careat: prudentiam, iustitiam, fortitudinem, temperantiam. has omnes sic habetis singuli, ut tamen emineatis in singulis.* See Pierre Nautin, "La date de la mort de Pauline, de l'épître 66 de Jérôme et de l'épître 13 de Paulin de Nole," *Augustinianum* 18 (1978): 547–50. Cf. also Jerome, *Epist.* 64.20 (Hilberg, *Epistulae* [cf. note 7], 611) of 397: *Hoc autem rationale duplex, apertum et absconditum, simplex et musicum, duodecim in se lapides habens et quattuor ordines, quas quattuor puto esse uirtutes: prudentiam, fortitudinem, iustitiam, temperantiam, quae sibi haerent inuicem et, dum mutuo miscentur, duodenarium numerum efficiunt, uel quattuor euangelia, quae in apocalypsi describuntur plena oculis et domini luce radiantia mundum inluminant, in uno quattuor et in quattuor singula; unde et ἀλώσις et ἀλήθεια, id est doctrina et ueritas, in pectore sacerdotis est.*

²⁷ See Meyer and Suntrup, *Lexikon* (cf. note 6), coll. 623–24.

²⁸ Jerome, *Comm. Matt.* 4.28.20 (Hurst and Adriaen, *Commentariorum* [cf. note 9], 283).

²⁹ See Manlio Simonetti, "Il millenarismo cristiano dal I al V secolo," and "Il millenarismo in Occidente," *Annali di Storia dell'Egesi* 15, no. 1 (1998): 7–20 and 181–89.

developments and rejects the materialistic aspects of chiliasm.³⁰ This may be seen in the anonymous exegete's interpretation of 1 Cor 15:52 and Rev 20:3–7³¹.

As has been noted above, Victorinus juxtaposes these same verses – 1 Cor 15:52 and Rev 20:3–7 – and interprets them in a millenarian key. Thanks to the Pauline reference to the last trumpet and to 1 Thess 4:15–17,³² Victorinus distinguishes two resurrections, identified with the first and second trumpet respectively. In the first resurrection, that is, in the millennium, the Lord will reign, the antichrist will be imprisoned, and the righteous will be raised to immortality and will be transformed and showered with glory. In the second resurrection, that is, in the final judgment, those who have not risen in the first resurrection and have not reigned with Christ in the millennium will rise again. These, of course, are the ungodly, the sinners, and the guilty of all kinds.³³

Closely related are notions found in several fragments of Ambrosiaster's *Commentary on Matthew*. In fragment 13, he presents what will happen at the end of the seventh millennium: the devil will be freed from prison and a war will begin against the saints together with Gog and Magog, who will then be annihilated.³⁴ However, it is above all in fragment 15 that he takes into consideration 1 Cor 15:52 and Rev 20:5, referring to some who interpret the first resurrection in reference to baptism on the basis of Col 3:1. To these Ambrosiaster counterpoises the

³⁰ See Di Santo, *L'apologetica* (cf. note 13), 190.

³¹ Cf. Ambrosiaster *Comm. 1 Cor 15.52* (Vogels [cf. note 14], 183–84): *In novissima tuba. Ideo novissima tuba, quia postremum bellum geretur daemones et principes ac potestates et ipsum diabolium. hoc enim fiet post annos mille, quibus hic regnabit salvator extincto Antichristo, cum Satanas dimittetur de carcere suo ad seducendas gentes Gog et Magog, qui sunt daemones, ut pugnent adversus castra sanctorum. nec enim temporales homines poterunt adversum aeternos dimicare.*

³² On these verses in Ambrosiaster see Pollastri, *Frammenti* (cf. note 4), 86–89.

³³ Cf. Victorinus, *Expl. Apoc. 5* (Gryson, *Explanatio* [cf. note 2], 254–56): *In hac eadem prima resurrectione et ciuitas futura et speciosa per hanc scripturam expressa est. Hanc primam resurrectionem et Paulus ad ecclesiam Macedoniam ita dixit: Hoc enim uobis ita dicimus, inquit, in uerbo dei quia ipse dominus suscitaturus in tuba dei descendet de caelo, et mortui in Christo stabunt primi, deinde nos qui uiuimus simul rapiemur cum eis in nubibus in obuiam domino <in aera et ita semper cum domino> erimus. Audiuimus dici tubam, obseruandum est <quod> alio loco apostolus aliam tubam nominat. Ait ergo ad Corinthios: In nouissima tuba mortui surgent, immortales fient, et nos mutabimur. Mortuos quidem immortales ad poenas sustinendas surgituros dixit, nos autem mutari et gloria contegi manifestum est. Ubi esse ergo audiuimus nouissimam tubam, intelligere debemus et primam; haec autem sunt duae resurrectiones. Quotquot ergo non anticipauerint surgere in prima resurrectione et regnare cum Christo super orbem super gentes uniuersas, surgent in nouissima tuba post annos mille, id est in nouissima resurrectione, inter impios et peccatores et uarii generis commissores. Merito adiecit dicendo: Beatus et sanctus qui habet partem in prima anastase, ad hu<n>c mors secunda non habet potestatem. Mors autem secunda castigatio est in infernum.* See Pollastri, “Escatologia,” (cf. note 15), 126–29, where it is emphasized how the anonymous exegete echoes both Victorinus's thought and terminology.

³⁴ Cf. Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Matt. frag. 13* (Pollastri, *Frammenti* [cf. note 4], 236): see Pollastri, “Escatologia” (cf. note 15), 116–17. Cf. also Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Matt. frag. 14* (Pollastri, *Frammenti* [cf. note 4], 238).

interpretation that the resurrection takes place through faith and not by sight and consequently the resurrection has to be understood in a real sense.

It is interesting to present in parallel this passage from fragment 15 of Ambrosiaster's *Commentary on Matthew*, a relevant passage from Tyconius's *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, and a corresponding passage from Jerome's revision of Victorinus's *Commentary on the Apocalypse*:

Table 1. Corresponding passages from Ambrosiaster, Tyconius, and Jerome.

Ambrosiaster, <i>Commentary on Matthew</i> 15 (Pollastri, <i>Frammenti</i> , 242)	Tyconius, <i>Commentary on Revelation</i> 7.20 (Gryson, <i>Expositio</i> , 220) ³⁵	Jerome, <i>Commentary on Revelation</i> 5 (Gryson, <i>Explantio</i> , 253–55)
<p>Quamquam aliquibus “prima resurrectio” in baptisate facta uideatur, quia dicit apostolus “Si conresurrexistis cum Christo” et cetera; in baptisate enim “terrenus homo” deponitur et “caelestis” adsumitur, mori enim uidetur “in baptismo” et resurgere cum renascitur. Sed “per fidem non per speciem,” quia hoc in spe habet, “non quod iam acciperit.” Illa enim resurrectio iam uera non in uerbo sed in re, non quae speretur sed quae iam sit, “prima” et in dignitate et in numero, quia congruum est primum sanctos resurgere et regrare cum Christo.³⁶</p>	<p>Ut ostenderet qui sunt isti mille anni, “haec est,” inquit, “resurrectio prima,” utique qua resurgimus per baptismum, sicut apostolus dicit: “Si consurrexistis cum Christo, quae sursum sunt quaerite,” et iterum: “Tamquam ex mortuis uiuentes.” Peccatum enim mors est, sicut idem dicit apostolus: “Cum essetis mortui delictis et peccatis uestris.” Sicut prima mors in hac est uita per peccata, ita et prima resurrectio in hac est uita per remissionem peccatorum.</p>	<p>Quod autem ait “haec resurrectio prima est,” duae sunt resurrectiones, sed prima resurrectio nunc est animarum per fidem, quae non permittit homines transire ad mortem secundam. De hac resurrectione dicit apostolus: Si resurrexistis cum Christo, quae sursum sunt quaerite.</p>

These texts clearly show that Ambrosiaster's polemical allusion finds significant confirmation in Tyconius and Jerome. The importance of this observation takes on special significance if we consider the fact that they seem to be the only ones in which the first resurrection of Rev 20:5 is associated with baptism in Col 3:1.³⁷

³⁵ Roger Gryson, ed., *Tyconii Afri Expositio Apocalypseos*, CCSL 107A (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011).

³⁶ See Pollastri, *Frammenti* (cf. note 4), 156–57 and 318.

³⁷ See Pollastri, “Escatologia” (cf. note 15), 116–17; Pollastri, *Frammenti* (cf. note 4), 156. See also Emanuela Prinziavalli, “L’Apocalisse tra Ticonio e Agostino,” in *L’Apocalisse nel Medioevo. Atti del convegno internazionale dell’Università degli studi di Milano e della Società Internazionale per lo Studio del Medioevo Latino (S. I. S. M. E. L.)*, Gargnano sul Garda, 18–20 maggio

It is also relevant to note how the interpretation of Rev 20:5 of Ambrosiaster's *Commentary on Matthew* is placed in the context of the anti-Arian polemic, as shown by the closing of fragment 15,³⁸ on the basis of 1 Cor 15:24.³⁹ *Quaestio* 97 is also framed in an anti-Arian light. There, Ambrosiaster briefly recalls some verses of Revelation (20:6; 21:22–23). The anonymous exegete understands the passages of Revelation in the sense of proving that the Father and the Son have the same divinity, without this questioning the uniqueness of God.⁴⁰

Finally, in *Quaestio* 112, Ambrosiaster interprets the walls of Jerusalem in Ps 50:28 with reference to the church and its construction by means of holy men, this on the basis of Rev 21:10–12.⁴¹ In Ambrosiaster's interpretation, which he bases on Psalm 50, "church" here is understood in a spiritual sense, for the church is where spiritual sacrifice is offered that is pleasing to God – an offering that is therefore superior to the Jewish one. This type of explanation fits well into Ambrosiaster's millenarian trend, which, on the one hand, is part of a tradition attested in the West and, on the other hand, shuns the more concrete and naive aspects of millenarian teaching.⁴²

2009, ed. Rossana E. Guglielmetti (Florence: Sismel, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2011), 95–115 at 101–2. It is evident that, if Ambrosiaster's reference were also to Jerome, relevant consequences would arise concerning the chronology of the anonymous exegete; this, however, falls outside the scope of this contribution. Furthermore, we also note that, according to Dulaey, "Jérôme 'éditeur'" (cf. note 1), 221, Tyconius's work would be known outside Africa only after 426; which would be a further reason to regard Ambrosiaster's polemical allusion as referring to Jerome's text.

³⁸ Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Matt.* 15 (Pollastri, *Frammenti* [cf. note 4], 242): *Tradere autem est 'regnum Deo et Patri' post finem sub nomine 'Dei et Patris regnare' Filium, ut regnum sub Dei nomine sit non sub Christi, quia iam cognitum erit de Deo Deum esse Christum, ut sub uno nomine regnet Pater et Filius in saecula saeculorum.* See Pollastri, "Escatologia" (cf. note 15), 118.

³⁹ On this Pauline text in Ambrosiaster's exegesis, see Pollastri, *Frammenti* (cf. note 4), 173–77.

⁴⁰ Ambrosiaster, *Quaest.* 97.4 (Souter, *Quaestiones* [cf. note 15], 174): *Nam spiritus dicitur dei, idem spiritus dicitur et Christi; ecclesia dicitur dei, dicitur et Christi; adoratur deus, adoratur et Christus; seruitur deo, seruitur et Christo; sancti dicuntur sacerdotes dei, dicuntur et sacerdotes Christi; templum ciuitatis sanctae dicitur deus, similiter et Christus; lumine dei inlustrari dicitur ciuitas sancta, eodem modo et Christi; sedes dei est, nec non et Christi; iudex deus est, est et Christus, quia Eesaias profeta in throno maiestatis Christum uidit sedentem dominum sabaoth, quod Arrii non negant.* See Alessandra Pollastri, "L'Apocalisse nell'Ambrosiaster: una lettura millenarista nella Roma del IV secolo?" in *Apokalysis: Percorsi nell'Apocalisse di Giovanni in onore di Ugo Vanni*, ed. Elena Bosetti and Angelo Colacrai (Assisi: Cittadella, 2005): 203–733 at 722–23; Di Santo, *L'apologetica* (cf. note 13), 312–13.

⁴¹ Ambrosiaster, *Quaest.* 112.28 (Souter, *Quaestiones* [cf. note 15], 297): *Et adiecit: et aedificentur muri Hierusalem. Quid est ut dicat: 'et aedificentur muri Hierusalem'? Numquid destructi fuerant? Sed muros Hierusalem dicens ecclesiam significat per fidem, quae in Christo disposita erat, construendam, cuius muri sancti esse homines intelleguntur docente nos Apocalypsi Iohannis apostoli. Quia et Hierusalem ciuitas et muri eius dei serui sunt intellegendi. Sciens ergo per Christum rex Dauid promissum, quod futurum erat ad liberationem seruorum dei, orat ut impleatur, id est, ut per fidem aedificentur ecclesia et liberentur sperantes de hac fide salutem.* See Pollastri, "L'Apocalisse nell'Ambrosiaster" (cf. note 40), 725.

⁴² See Pollastri, *Frammenti* (cf. note 4), 156.

Conclusions

Commenting on Matt 27:52–53, Jerome observes that *sancta ciuitas* mentioned there can refer to both the heavenly Jerusalem and the earthly Jerusalem – even if elsewhere he had proscribed this double interpretation⁴³ – and specifies that the resurrection mentioned in these verses is not a general resurrection.⁴⁴ Because there is no hint of polemic in this passage, it is safe to conclude that Jerome was unfamiliar with Ambrosiaster’s *Commentary on Matthew*,⁴⁵ where the author interprets Matt 27:52–53 as referring to a general resurrection. Indeed, if Jerome were aware of Ambrosiaster’s teaching, he would surely have addressed it. After all, we know that in the spring of 398, in addition to composing *Commentary on Matthew* and revising Victorinus’s *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, he had received an anonymous text on the interpretation of Melchizedek as a figure of the Holy Spirit – one that was later identified with Ambrosiaster’s *Quaestio* 109 – the refutation of which occupies Jerome’s *Epistle* 73.⁴⁶

It seems legitimate, then, to place Jerome’s reflection on the heavenly Jerusalem in this context. It is very likely driven by the political motifs coming from Rome, where at the end of the fourth century Ambrosiaster, too, was reflecting on the same theme in the millenarian exegetic tradition, albeit in a more evolved form. It is therefore from Rome, a city characterized by cultural and religious multiplicity and by a variety of soteriological needs, that the call comes to Bethlehem

⁴³ Cf. Jerome, *Epist.* 46.7 (Hilberg, *Epistulae* [cf. note 7], 337–38): *Et quid necesse est plura conquirere, cum post passionem et resurrectionem domini Mattheus euangelista commemoret: et petrae scissae sunt et sepulchra aperta et plurima corpora dormientium sanctorum surrexerunt. Et egredientes de sepulchris post resurrectionem suam ingressi sunt sanctam ciuitatem et apparuerunt multis? Nec statim Hierosolyma caelestis, ut plerique ridicule arbitrantur, in hoc loco intellegitur, cum signum nullum esse potuerit apud homines domini resurgentis, si corpora sanctorum in caelesti Hierusalem uisa sunt. Cf. also *Epist.* 60.3 (p. 551): *Ante Christum Abraham apud inferos; post Christum latro in paradiso. Et idcirco in resurrectione eius multa dormientium corpora surrexerunt et uisa sunt in caelesti Hierusalem.**

⁴⁴ Cf. Jerome, *Comm. Matt.* 4.27.52–53 (Hurst and Adriaen *Commentariorum* [cf. note 9], 275–76): *Et multa corpora sanctorum qui dormierunt surrexerunt et exeuntes de monumentis post resurrectionem eius uenerunt in sanctam ciuitatem et apparuerunt multis. Quomodo Lazarus mortuus resurrexit sic et multa corpora sanctorum resurrexerunt ut Dominum ostenderent resurgentem. Et tamen cum monumenta aperta sint non ante resurrexerunt quam Dominus resurgeret ut esset primogenitus resurrectionis ex mortuis. Sanctam autem ciuitatem in qua uisi sunt resurgentes aut Hierusalem caelestem intellegamus aut hanc terrenam quae ante sancta fuerit. Sicut et Matheus appellatur publicanus non quo et apostolus adhuc permaneat publicanus sed quo pristinum uocabulum teneat, sancta appellabatur ciuitas Hierusalem propter templum et Sancta sanctorum et ob distinctionem aliarum urbium in quibus idola colebantur. Quando uero dicitur: apparuerunt multis, Ostentateur non generalis fuisse resurrectio quae omnibus appareret, sed specialis ad plurimos ut hi uiderent qui cernere merebantur.*

⁴⁵ A detailed study on the relationship between these two commentaries on Matthew goes beyond the present study but could perhaps offer some important insights.

⁴⁶ On the points of contact between Jerome, *Epist.* 73 and *Expl. Apoc. Prol.*, see Dulaey, “Jerome ‘editeur’” (cf. note 1), 202–4, 206, 215, 234.

for a new hermeneutic proposal of the heavenly Jerusalem. In this new interpretation, it is possible to re-evaluate Origenian exegetical learning, towards which the Latin-language exegesis was traditionally sceptical.